Spring 5-1-2013

Practicing and Preservice Teachers' Sense of Efficacy for Character Education

Carolyn Lowe

University of Connecticut - Storrs, calwh@comcast.net

Practicing and Preservice Teachers'

Sense of Efficacy for Character Education

Carolyn Lowe

Honors Thesis

University of Connecticut

Spring 2013

Table of Contents

Abstract

This study explored preservice and practicing teachers' perspectives on their preparation to support students' character development and their sense of efficacy in implementing classroom practices related to this area of education. The research questions framing the study were as follows: (1) What levels of efficacy around character education do practicing and preservice elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program report? (2) How do efficacy levels differ between practicing and preservice teachers? (3) What influences on their efficacy for character education do practicing and preservice teachers report? The study involved a survey of 79 practicing and preservice teachers, with similar group sizes between the two groups. Results overall were similar to previous research using an instrument assessing teacher efficacy for character education, with overall scores somewhat positive about teachers' efficacy in this area. Descriptive results also suggested a possible pattern of slightly higher levels of efficacy for character education among preservice teachers as compared to practicing teachers, although the difference did not prove to be statistically significant. Teacher responses also indicated the importance of both personal and professional experiences in developing skills for supporting student development in this area.

Chapter I

Introduction

In today's world, it is more important than ever to ensure that our children are equipped with the tools they need to ensure the development of positive character traits. Many would agree that the goal of education is not only to produce educated children, but also to continuously improve our society (LePage, Darling-Hammond, Akar, Gutierrez, Jenkins-Gunn, & Rosebrock, 2005). Teaching positive character traits such as responsibility and respect can help combat the negative presence of bullying in our schools, creating an effective learning environment for all (CEP, 2008). Furthermore, our society needs to recognize the necessity of aiding our youth in practicing good decision making in an increasingly challenging world. Educating our younger generations on conflict resolution, communication, and decision making skills will not only help them to lead more productive lives but also stay away from harmful choices like delinquency and alcohol and substance abuse (The Alliance of Youth Executive Officers and UNICEF, 2003). Advocates of such aspects of schooling emphasize that a failure to focus on character education results in an overall moral decline in our young people, categorized by an increase in violence, teen pregnancy, and similar irresponsible behaviors (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). For these reasons, it is clear that character education needs to be of considerable importance to all involved in the field of education today.

Statement of Problem

Character education has been supported by the federal government, numerous professional education organizations, and educators across the country in recent years (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). However, limited research has been done surrounding an essential element in the implementation of character education practices: the classroom teacher. Recent research on

direct approaches to character education place "enormous responsibility on teachers" rather than relying on a "hidden curriculum" (Milson & Mehlig, 2002, p. 47). This study was designed to measure teacher efficacy for character education to delve further into the unknown effectiveness and impact of teacher preparation programs and classroom experience. Self-efficacy, a concept originally defined by Albert Bandura, translates to educators as a teacher's judgment of his or her capabilities to teach a certain subject (Narvaez, Vaydich, Khmelkov, & Turner, 2008). Increasing teacher efficacy is related to higher persistence and motivation to teach any subject in the classroom (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Narvaez et al., 2008). Through research, a better understanding of teacher efficacy for character education may be reached and may support ways of increasing teachers' efficacy in this area. Through a survey to preservice and practicing elementary school teachers, this study sought to discover insights into how teacher efficacy for character education differs between these two groups and why.

Purpose of Study

This study was designed to contribute to existing research on teacher efficacy for character education and spark discussion on how teacher preparation programs currently prepare teachers to foster the development of positive character traits in their students and how they can be improved. This study is framed by three research questions:

1. What levels of efficacy around character education do practicing and preservice elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program report?

2. How do efficacy levels differ between practicing and preservice teachers?

3. What influences on their efficacy for character education do practicing and preservice teachers report?

In the next four chapters, background information and existing research on character education will be discussed. Methods, results, and finally conclusions from the data collected through this study will also be described in relation to the three research questions.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Character education is an area of education that has long been considered by educators to serve a critical purpose in schools throughout U.S. history (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Support for the subject has waxed and waned over the course of the past several decades, but recent movements in the field of education have resulted in an increased interest in the multitude of approaches available to schools today. In order to ensure effective practice, the role and confidence of the classroom teacher needs to be examined thoroughly because of the impact he or she has on implementation of character education. Preservice teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs also need to be researched and evaluated further in order to address future possibilities for these programs, which typically do not contain a focus on character education. This chapter will first provide a historical overview of the topic. Various definitions and approaches to character education will then be examined. After a review of the effects of character education program implementation, teacher efficacy related to the subject will be explored. Finally, the limited attention that currently surrounds teacher preparation for character education will be addressed before the paper delves into the methods of this particular study.

History of Character Education

Character education has long been considered an essential aspect of education. In addition to the development of intellect, the progression of the moral values of children has been a purpose of public education for centuries (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2003). Historically, schools in the United States have considered the development of character a vital part of one's education (McClellan, 1992, cited in Milson & Mehlig, 2002). McClellan (1999) was further cited by Benninga and colleagues (2003) in stating that cultivating character as well as intellect has been of considerable importance to American educational principles since the

colonies were formed.   Nevertheless, this educational attitude towards character education has

not been unwavering.

Despite a strong historical past, support for character education in the United States

experienced a general decline throughout several decades during the 20th century. Values

education in public schools became complicated beginning in the 1940s by issues of separation

of church and state (Prestwich, 2004). The teaching of values was interpreted as teaching

religion, and it was popularly viewed as a clear violation of the separation of church and state

(Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). This view of character education made way for the values-

clarification approach, which became popular in the 1960s and emphasized providing students

with the chance to choose their own values, rather than having specific values taught to them

(Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Prestwich, 2004; Sanchez, 2005). Thus, the values-clarification

approach de-emphasized the role of the educational system and the teacher in one's development

of character, again taking the focus away from character education in schools. The values-

clarification approach, combined with an increased focus on academics and the separation of

church and state, contributed to the decreased interest in character education until the 1980s

(Sanchez, 2005).

An emphasis on character education began to re-emerge in the 1980s and 1990s.

Williams (2000) classified the character education movement as the "fastest growing reform in

education" (p. 32). According to Lickona (1991, cited in Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006), declining

opinions about the quality of public education shifted educators' focus back towards the area of

character education. A perceived increase in teen deviant behavior such as violence, drug abuse,

and teen pregnancy was attributed to the receding presence of character education, and many felt

schools were to blame (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Additional factors that brought attention back

to character education in public schools were an increase in actual data on youth deviance and a spike in high profile ethics violations thrust into the public eye (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007).   The negative perceptions of the American school system and the perceived lack of moral guidance provided to our younger generations have therefore contributed to the revival of character education.

A similar predicament related to character education has been caught in teacher preparation programs as well. According to Narvaez & Lapsley (2008) few teacher education programs are intentionally and deliberately preparing preservice teachers for task of developing positive character traits in their students. There are two potential reasons why this is so: there are too many other objectives that overwhelm the academic curriculum of those studying to become educators, and that nobody "wants to be caught teaching values" despite community expectations that schools should address the character of their students (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). The issue of whether or not teacher education programs should advocate for implicit or explicit instruction of character in the classroom will be revisited later in this study.

Sanchez (2005) asserted that as an influential social institution, schools bear much of the responsibility to teach values to our youth and, thus, to prepare them to become effective citizens in a democratic society. In accordance with this belief, the federal government has granted much support for character education in the midst of the recent revival (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Several national character education organizations have been launched and national and regional character education conferences organized over the past several decades (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007). Character education was also included in the No Child Left Behind Act, and is currently endorsed by many state legislatures across the country (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Prestwich, 2004). Several different character education programs have become available for use in schools,

ranging from broad and comprehensive to focused on specific areas such as bullying or community improvement (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006).

Defining Character Education

Educational researchers have developed an array of definitions and models for character education that overlap but also differ. This variation makes it difficult to measure the effects of character education as a larger concept or approach. Sanchez (2005) attributed the diversity of perspectives on character education to a fundamental disagreement over whose values should be taught and how. LePage and Sockett (2002) attributed these confusions into four themes: people either view morality as stemming from religious beliefs, view morality as stemming from subjective opinions, view morality as relative to the society you are living in, or view morality as limited (cited in LePage et al., 2005). Regardless of the reason, theories and psychological perspectives designed to help clear up the confusion over character education have instead served to cause more incoherence (Sanchez, 2005). Additionally, those in the education field still have a lingering fear of crossing the line between church and state, and this fear, combined with the uncertainty that exists in defining character education, has not helped in reaching a consensus (Sanchez, 2005).

The meaning of character education stems from the beliefs that those in the field of education hold – beliefs that range from focusing on getting students to obey the rules of a classroom and get along with others to focusing on guiding students to be "autonomous thinkers who question injustice" to focusing on teaching core virtues (LePage et al., 2005, p. 347). This ambiguity is demonstrated in the wide range of existing definitions of character education. These definitions vary from extremely broad to narrow in focus, concentrating on varied topics such as ethical character (e.g., respect and fairness), performance character (e.g., self-discipline and effort), or developmental outcomes (e.g., emotional literacy and positive perception of

school; Benninga et al., 2003). The Character Education Partnership (CEP, 2008) noted these differences in classifications of character as well, stating that there are certain aspects of human maturity that relate to our capacity to love (morality) and certain aspects that relate to our capacity to work (performance). While there are these differences, however, moral and performance character are mutually supportive and are both vital in the successful development of an individual's character (CEP, 2008).

Existing definitions tend to rely on identifying the essential elements of character education in order to form a definition because of the lack of universal approach towards the subject. Examples of these varying definitions and the components included in them can be seen throughout the literature on the topic. Muscott and O'Brien (1999) cited an earlier publication by the CEP (1993) in defining character education as "the deliberate effort by schools, families, and communities to help young people understand, care about, and act upon core ethical values" (p. 374). Berkowitz and Bier (2007) defined character education in terms of developmental outcomes that provide students with the means and motivation to act in accordance with moral values, such as socio-moral reasoning and behavioral competencies related to morality. Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) cited Lickona (1991) in stating that character is the ability to apply morals such as respect, fairness, and responsibility when faced with ethical and behavioral choices (p. 84). Williams (2000) provided a broad definition by classifying character education as "any deliberate approach by which school personnel…help children and youth become caring, principled, and responsible" (p. 32). The variation in factors is clear – they range from understanding to moral reasoning to being principled and responsible.

Because their instrument is central to the current study, it is important that the definition provided by Milson and Mehlig (2002) be properly examined. The authors employed a basic

definition by stating that character education is "the process of developing in students an understanding of, a commitment to, and a tendency to behave in accordance with core ethical values" (Milson & Mehlig, 2002, p. 47). Additionally, the authors advocated for explicit instruction in the classroom centered on good character traits, or components of character education. Teachers should not rely on a "hidden curriculum" and hope that these ethical traits are somehow instilled in students (Milson & Mehlig, 2002, p. 47). Rather, educators must fully acknowledge their influence and responsibility in the development of the moral character of their students, and employ a direct approach in their instruction on character education (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; LePage et al., 2005).

Sanchez (2005) argued that a universal definition is possible if, as a society, we are able to agree upon certain natural and core values that are vital to human nature and one's citizenship in a democracy. Edgington (2002) supported this belief by stating that although character education is by nature subjective, there are certain values that a society collectively depends upon in order to sustain itself. Through this viewpoint, a fair degree of consensus has been reached about what traits are desirable in a functional society, a list which includes fairness, trust, honesty, respect, and responsibility (Prestwich, 2004). Defining character education, therefore, is less about creating a traditional definition and more about determining its critical components.

The variety among these critical components is caused by the subjective nature of character education itself. Because of this diversity, educational researchers have continuously found it difficult to find an effective way to measure the effects of character education. The approaches to measuring the effects of character education, and what those effects are, will be explored next.

Effects of Character Education

Numerous studies have focused on determining the effects of implementing character education programs in schools. In general, these studies have measured these effects in terms of pre-defined outcomes relating to student and/or teacher behaviors, perceptions, social and emotional competencies, and achievement. Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) measured the change in behavioral indicators, school achievement, and community members' (students, staff, and parents) perceptions of community members' behavior after implementation of character education programs across four years in five school districts. These three outcomes were evaluated through the administration of surveys and examination of behavioral data such as dropout and suspension rates, as well as standardized test scores (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). The researchers found a demonstrable relationship between the implementation of character education and perceptions of student behavior, and mixed results and no relationship between character education implementation and the outcomes of behavioral indicators and school achievement, respectively (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). The authors noted how the inconsistency of desired outcomes, which vary considerably between schools and districts, makes it difficult to measure the effectiveness of these programs (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). Additionally, each district had the opportunity to implement their choice of character education program, and the inherent differences in these programs contributed to the variation in desired outcomes as well (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006).

Skaggs and Bodenhorn (2006) also studied the importance of fidelity in successful implementation of character education programs. A group of "high implementation schools" was identified based upon rewards and recognition by local administrators, and this group was determined to have higher student and staff behavioral perceptions than lower implementation

schools (Skaggs & Bodenhorn, 2006). The degree of implementation is thus associated with bringing about positive effects from character education programs. Other studies have recognized the significance of fidelity in the administration of character programs as well. Chang and Muñoz (2006) emphasized the critical need for a high level of implementation and teacher preparation in striving for success in character education. In their study examining the effect of a specific character education program on several outcomes, Chang and Muñoz (2006) determined that the program had positive effects on teachers' assessments of themselves and the school. Therefore, a well implemented character education program has been shown not only to produce better results within the program itself, but also to benefit teacher perceptions of their character education practice. This possible link between experience and efficacy will be explored further in this study.

Berkowitz and Bier (2007) identified many critical implementation strategies through their in-depth examination of recent studies concerning character education. These implementation strategies include professional development for implementation, interactive teaching strategies, and direct teaching strategies. Although many previous studies failed to examine the relationship between fidelity of implementation and student outcomes, those that did all found a positive correlation between those two variables (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007).

Through their examination of outcome effects in recent studies, Berkowitz and Bier (2007) determined that character education can "effectively promote the development of various psychological outcomes" related to character when programs are implemented with fidelity (p. 41). The effectiveness of any character education program depends on effective implementation, which in turn depends on teachers and their beliefs and attitudes about teaching character to

students (Prestwich, 2004). The essential role of the teacher cannot be forgotten in examining character education.

Character Education and Teacher Efficacy

The teacher is a critical element in the implementation of character education in today's schools. In terms of the general purposes of schooling, teachers are those who bear the responsibility of producing societal change through the education of younger generations (Edgington, 2002). This notion translates well to the subject of character education. The recent movement behind character education has, in general, advocated for direct approaches in the classroom, which puts a great deal of responsibility on teachers (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Although these direct approaches vary in terms of content, the participation of the teacher remains consistent throughout (Prestwich, 2004; Sanchez, 2005). Teachers are the key to effective implementation of character education programs (Prestwich, 2004). One approach to examining the role of the teacher is through the lens of teacher efficacy.

Self-efficacy was an idea originally conceptualized by Albert Bandura. According to Bandura, self-efficacy illustrates "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391, cited in Narvaez et al., 2008, p. 4). Self-efficacy can be applied to a variety of domains, including teaching and more specifically, teaching a certain subject such as character education (Narvaez et al., 2008). Self-efficacy is classified as domain-specific, which means that a teacher who feels high self-efficacy towards teaching mathematics may not feel such positive self-efficacy towards character education (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Narvaez et al., 2008).

High teacher efficacy is related to higher persistence and motivation in the classroom (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Narvaez et al., 2008). Character education programs are unlikely to

yield immediate or observable change in students, and for that reason the subject is an area in which teachers need a high degree of persistence and motivation in order to succeed (Milson, 2003). Increasing teacher efficacy towards character education, therefore, has the potential to increase teachers' abilities to motivate themselves and persist in teaching a very important but also difficult and somewhat ambiguous subject. Classrooms with instructors who have high teacher efficacy also experience greater degrees of student academic success, therefore producing student benefit as well (Milson, 2003; Narvaez et al., 2008). The actual implementation of character education programs has been shown to be positively correlated with teacher perceptions and efficacy (Chang & Muñoz, 2006).

Teacher efficacy can further be defined in two parts: personal teacher efficacy (a teacher's belief about his or her abilities in teaching) and general teacher efficacy (a teacher's belief about how much external factors, such as students' family background, influence or can be changed by his or her teaching; Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Narvaez et al., 2008). These two constructs collectively make up an individual's sense of efficacy towards educating students on a certain subject (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Both personal teacher efficacy (PTE) and general teacher efficacy (GTE) are grounded in Bandura's ideas of self-efficacy and outcome expectancy (Milson & Mehlig, 2002; Narvaez et al., 2008).

Milson and Mehlig (2002) developed an instrument to measure teacher efficacy specifically within the domain of moral education. They devised their study to apply the construct of teacher efficacy to the field of character education and to describe efficacy beliefs of practicing teachers (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Milson and Mehlig (2002) designed the Character Education Efficacy Belief Instrument (CEEBI) to "measure teachers' sense of efficacy for character education" (p. 49). The researchers modified an existing instrument created by Gibson

and Dembo (1984) called the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) so that it would specifically measure teacher efficacy for character education. The original TES was designed to measure both PTE and GTE. The CEEBI adapted the measures on the TES so that it contained twelve survey items written in first-person (to measure PTE) and twelve survey items written in reference to third-person teachers (to measure GTE; Milson & Mehlig, 2002). The items were written for response using a five-point Likert scale.

The researchers found that the teachers' responses to the CEEBI indicated high levels of both PTE and GTE for character education, as indicated by mean composite scores of 48.58 and 45.34 (out of a possible score of 60) for the sets of 12 items concerning PTE and GTE, respectively (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). Overall, the items designed to measure GTE generated more "problematic efficacy beliefs" (Milson & Mehlig, 2002, p. 50). Through the collection of demographic information about the surveyed population, Milson and Mehlig (2002) also discovered that teachers who graduated from private, religiously-affiliated institutions possessed higher levels of teacher efficacy for character education than those who attended other types of colleges and universities. The authors suggested that teacher preparation for character education needs to be investigated further, particularly to examine the connection between actual character education practice and the efficacy of the teacher (Milson & Mehlig, 2002).

Because there was a concern over the CEEBI being too broad of a measure, Narvaez et al. (2008) expanded upon the CEEBI to create an instrument that was designed to more accurately measure personal self-efficacy for teachers engaging in character education. The resulting instrument, called the Teacher Efficacy for Moral Education (TEME) scale, contained five scales measuring various aspects of instructional efficacy, self-efficacy for character education (CEEBI), and school climate (Narvaez et al., 2008). The results of the study indicated

high construct validity for the TEME scale (Narvaez et al., 2008). The CEEBI subscale found a mean item score of 3.92 (SD=.45) for personal teacher efficacy and a mean item score of 3.43 (SD=.43) for general teacher efficacy (Narvaez et al., 2008). Based on their findings, Narvaez et al. (2008) suggested that "teacher self-efficacy for moral education may be an especially promising tool for measuring the effects of teacher character education preparation" (p. 13). According to Narvaez et al. (2008), teacher preparation programs do not usually involve coursework focusing on socio-moral development. The potential connection between practicing teacher self-efficacy and preservice teacher preparation is one that needs to be explored in order to discover ways to evaluate the effectiveness of both character education programs and teacher education programs for the subject.

Milson (2003) built upon the 2002 Milson and Mehlig study to sample teachers from a variety of grade levels, subject areas, teaching communities, and training experiences using the CEEBI. This broader follow-up study examined teacher efficacy for character education and the effects of the independent variables listed above (Milson, 2003). The effect of training experiences related to character education provides a strong link to the purpose of the current study. The sample population of 930 participants included over 80 percent of teachers with greater than ten years of experience, about 8 percent with seven to ten years of experience, 6 percent with four to six years of experience, almost 2 percent with one to three years of experience, and 0.5 percent were first-year teachers (Milson, 2003). Those participants that responded "yes" to the demographic question "Have you received any coursework or staff development in character education?" had composite scores for PTE and GTE that were significantly higher than those who responded "no" (Milson, 2003, p. 98). The results of this study suggest that direct teacher preparation, through either university-based coursework or non-

university-based training, has a positive effect on teacher efficacy for character education (Milson, 2003). This relationship was investigated further in the present research project.

In another article by Narvaez and Lapsley (2008), two approaches to character education in teacher education programs are presented. The first describes a minimalist approach, where "best practice instruction" is enough to result in appropriate moral development in students; in other words, preparing preservice teachers to become outstanding educators will translate to positive character development without specialized attention on moral education in teacher preparation programs (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). The second approach is classified as maximist, and urges that "best practice instruction is necessary but not sufficient" (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008, p. 162). This translates to more transparent and planned instruction that involves deliberate activities and lessons that are designed to instill positive ethical skills and attitudes in all students (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). This approach needs to be explicitly covered in teacher education programs in order to ensure success, and therefore does not rely on a hidden curriculum as the minimalist approach does (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2008). The researchers do not advocate for one approach over the other; they merely present two as options for consideration in teacher preparation programs.

LePage and colleagues (2005) argue that new teachers need to be able to understand the differing perspectives on character education in order to make their own educated decisions about how they will approach character education in their own classrooms. Novice teachers would also be benefited by being made aware of existing character education programs, or at least the strategies contained in most of them (LePage et al., 2005). Based upon their research, the authors suggest several implications for teacher preparation programs for better classroom management through character education, including practical experience and critical reflection

on teaching experiences (LePage et al., 2005). There is also existing research that argues that the development of dispositions that embody respect and care for students and value the development of morals in children will result in successful teaching in the social domain of schooling (LePage et al., 2005). These ideas will be explored in the open-ended aspects of this study, and the results will hopefully produce more insight into what should be included in teacher preparation programs in order to generate effective character educators.

Purpose of Study

The results and implications of the Milson and Mehlig (2002), Narvaez et al. (2008), Milson (2003), and LePage et al. (2005) studies beg us to delve further into the relationship between teacher efficacy, effective character education practice, and teacher preparation for character education. This study employed the CEEBI instrument to survey teacher efficacy beliefs of both practicing and preservice teachers in order to learn more about current character education practices as well as what can be done to prepare teachers more successfully to implement character education effectively in their future classrooms. Through the collection and comparison of CEEBI data, this study explored the following research questions:

1. What levels of efficacy around character education do practicing and preservice elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program report?

2. How do efficacy levels differ between practicing and preservice teachers?

3. What influences on their efficacy for character education do practicing and preservice teachers report?

Chapter III

Method

This study used a survey approach to explore teacher efficacy for character education among current students and alumni from the same teacher preparation program. The study sought to examine efficacy for character education across this total group and within the subgroups.

Participants

The sample for this study was drawn from student and alumni populations who are either currently enrolled in or graduated from the education program at a large public state university in the Northeast. Both groups were restricted to contain only elementary education majors or practicing elementary school teachers. These two groups were contacted via two existing LISTSERVs. Both e-mails requested that only elementary education majors or practicing elementary school teachers should respond to the survey. Some alumni responses indicated that they taught through middle school grades, and one indicated a high school grade level. Alumni participants were those who had graduated from the teacher preparation program in the past 5 years (2007-2011). The instrument was sent to about 120 current students and 200 alumni. At the conclusion of data collection, approximately 30% of students and 20% of alumni who had received the survey had responded.

Eighty surveys were submitted through an online system. Of the participants, 36 indicated they were currently students in the education program, and 43 indicated that they were graduates. One survey response was discarded because the participant did not respond to questions beyond the eighth item. Thus, the final total sample included 79 participants. See Tables 1 and 2 for more complete demographic information about the respondents.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of All Respondents (N=79)

Variable	Frequency	Sample %
Gender		
Male	3	3.8
Female	76	96.2
Racial/Ethnic Group		
African American/Black	1	1.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	2.5
Caucasian/White, Non-Hispanic	73	92.4
Hispanic	2	2.5
Received coursework/PD in character education		
Yes	22	27.8
No	57	72.2
Type of coursework/PD received in character education (N=22)[a]		
Session at a conference	1	4.5
Graduate coursework	2	9
Staff development workshop	13	59.1
Undergraduate Coursework	11	50
Other	2	9
Currently enrolled in the education program		
Yes	36	45.6
No	43	54.4

[a] *Note.* Participants could indicate more than one response, so percentages total more than 100%.

Table 2

Additional Demographic Characteristics of Alumni Respondents (N=43)[a]

Variable	Frequency	Sample %
Grade level(s) taught this year		
K	5	11.6
1	5	11.6
2	5	11.6
3	7	16.3
4	7	16.3
5	6	14
6	4	9.3
7	3	6.8
8	3	6.8
Type of community students live in		
Rural	6	14
Suburban	29	67.4
Urban	12	28
SES of majority of students		
High family income	10	23.3
Middle family income	26	60.5
Low family income	10	23.3
Type of school		
Public school	38	88.4
Private school with religious mission	1	2.3
Private school without religious mission	1	2.3
Other	2	4.7
Years of teaching experience		
This is my first year teaching	11	25.6
1-3 years	32	74

[a] *Note.* Participants could indicate more than one response to most of these questions, so percentages total more than 100%.

Instrument

The instrument used in this study included three sections (see Appendix A for entire original instrument). The first section consisted of 24 Likert-scale items regarding teacher efficacy for character education. Participants answered these items by selecting strongly disagree, disagree, uncertain, agree, or strongly agree. The second section of the survey posed several basic demographic questions. Finally, participants were asked to respond to five open-ended questions.

All 24 Likert-scale items were used with permission from the Character Education Efficacy Belief Instrument (CEEBI) originally designed and used in a study by Andrew Milson and Lisa Mehlig (2002). The survey items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Twelve of the statements were designed to measure personal teacher efficacy for character education (PTE), and twelve of the statements were designed to measure general teacher efficacy for character education (GTE). As written by Milson and Mehlig (2002), the PTE statements all use the first person, and the GTE statements all use third-person language.

For this study, several additional open-ended questions were added, along with some demographic questions. All respondents were asked to answer demographic questions regarding gender, racial/ethnic group, and whether or not they had received coursework or staff development regarding character education. Those who responded "yes" to being a current student were directed to a question about their anticipated graduation year. Those who responded "no" were directed to questions about the grade level taught, community, and socio-economic status of students in the school they currently teach, as well as years of teaching experience. Both groups answered four identical open-ended questions regarding their feelings on the influence of their teacher preparation program, teacher responsibility for character

education, and packaged character education programs. The final open-ended item for each

group (Question 5) differed in that students were asked about how they think further experience

will affect their abilities to teach character education, while alumni were asked about their

perceptions of the effect of their increased years in the classroom. The open-ended questions are

listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Open-Ended Items

Group	Open-ended Items
Student	
	1. In what ways do you feel the education program has influenced your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) within your teaching?
	2. What else do you feel has shaped your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) in your students?
	3. What is your opinion on the degree to which teachers should be responsible for fostering and supporting the development of positive character traits in their students?
	4. What is your opinion on the use of a packaged character education program?
	5. How do you think further experience in the field of education will affect your ability to foster and support the development of positive character traits in your students?
Alumni	
	1. In what ways do you feel the education program has influenced your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) within your teaching?
	2. What else do you feel has shaped your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) in your students?
	3. What is your opinion on the degree to which teachers should be responsible for fostering and supporting the development of positive

character traits in their students?

4. What is your opinion on the use of a packaged character education program?

5. How do you feel that increased experience in the classroom (years teaching) has shaped your ability to foster and support the development of positive character traits in your students?

Context

All participants are either current students or graduated alumni of the same teacher preparation program. The program in question grants both Bachelor of Science and Master's degrees to its students. Required courses include PBIS, exceptionality, and methods courses covering subjects such as reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. Students are placed in two semester-long clinic placements as a junior and one year-long clinic placement as a senior, culminating in a semester-long student teaching experience. Although there are no specific courses on character education, some courses, such as PBIS, may include components that involve teaching strategies to instill positive character traits in students.

Procedures and Data Analysis

E-mails were sent out explaining the study and containing the link to the online survey. After initial e-mails had been sent, a reminder e-mail was sent to each group about a month later, which resulted in an increased number of completed survey responses. All survey responses were anonymous and collected through an online system with SSL encryption.

Using Cronbach's index of internal consistency, Milson and Mehlig (2002) reported coefficients of .829 for the PTE scale and .612 for the GTE scale, with a sample of 254 practicing teachers. In the current study, similar internal consistency results were found for the

PTE scale (α=.820), but the reliability for the GTE scale was lower (α=.427), therefore showing somewhat questionable reliability within the sample..

Twelve items were reverse scored (see Table 4). Reverse scored items were confirmed with Milson to ensure correspondence with the original instrument. To see the complete modified CEEBI and item means after reverse scoring, see Appendices A and B. Descriptive statistics were calculated on both the PTE and GTE scales as determined by Milson and Mehlig (2002), as well as on each individual item. Further analysis was completed comparing the student and alumni groups using a *t* test, and comparing those who reported receiving and not receiving training or professional development for character education.

Table 4

Reverse Scored Items

Item
2. When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact that child's character.
4. Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous.
6. I am usually at a loss as to how to help a student be more responsible.
8. I am not sure that I can teach my students to be honest.
10. Teachers who spend time encouraging students to be respectful of others will see little change in students' social interaction.
13. Some students will not become more respectful even if they have had teachers who promote respect.
15. If students are inconsiderate it is often because teachers have not sufficiently modeled this trait.
16. If responsibility is not encouraged in a child's home, teachers will have little success teaching this trait at school.
17. I often find it difficult to persuade a student that respect for others is important.
20. Teaching students what it means to be honest is unlikely to result in students who are more

honest.

21. I sometimes don't know what to do to help students become more compassionate.

22. Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest.

Basic inductive analysis was conducted on the responses received for the five open-ended qualitative items. Responses were coded and analyzed for common patterns among answers across questions and across population groups. Themes and categories were then determined based upon the similarities found. Results of the qualitative analysis will be discussed in Chapter IV around three general themes participants described as related to their sense of efficacy for teaching character education: (a) the influence of the teacher preparation program; (b) the influence of personal values and upbringing; and (c) the influence of experience in the classroom. Specific patterns within the questions about teacher responsibility and pre-packaged programs will also be described.

Statement of Researcher Bias

In qualitative research, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's own connection to the context and results of the study. As a student in the same program as all participants, I am knowledgeable about the character education elements, faculty, and clinical experiences connected with the program. I feel that it is an important topic worth studying due to the ambiguous nature of character education within the field of education and the general lack of research in regards to how scholarly programs approach character education as an aspect of the preparation of their students in becoming practicing elementary school teachers.

Trustworthiness

In order to increase trustworthiness, I ensured that the survey was distributed to all program participants, and not a selection of participants based upon any particular factor. Coding of qualitative responses was also reviewed with a second researcher.

In the next chapter, the results of the study will be examined through the three research questions listed earlier:

1. What levels of efficacy around character education do practicing and preservice elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program report?

2. How do efficacy levels differ between practicing and preservice teachers?

3. What influences on their efficacy for character education do practicing and preservice teachers report?

Chapter IV

Results

This chapter will report results found from the survey described in Chapter III. The chapter will discuss results by research question.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, *what levels of efficacy around character education do practicing and preservice elementary teachers from the same teacher preparation program report?*

Mean scores and standard deviations for all items after item reversal are listed in order from greatest to least in Appendix B. Higher item mean scores indicate a more positive sense of efficacy, while lower item mean scores indicate a lower sense of efficacy. Across the entire sample, responses indicated higher mean composite scores for the PTE scale (46.89, SD = 5.037) than for the GTE scale (42.49, SD = 3.120) out of a possible score of 60. Each item was scored on a range of 1-5, with 5 representing the most positive efficacy beliefs. Specific item scores reflected the pattern of the scale means, with the average PTE item score being greater (3.908) than the average GTE item score (3.541).

After reverse scoring, the item with the highest mean score among all participants (4.696, SD = 0.463) was "I am confident in my ability to be a good role model." In total, six items had mean scores above 4, including "I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students" and "When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe I can do much to impact that child's character." These statements were therefore indicative of high teacher efficacy. The item with the lowest mean score among all participants (2.405, SD = 0.855) was "Some students will not become more respectful even if they have had

teachers who promote respect", indicating that many participants feel that there are students in whom they cannot instill respect despite their best efforts. This item was reversed so that a greater number of responses that indicated agree or strongly agree resulted in a lower item mean score. There were three items with a mean score below 3, including "When I have a student who lies regularly, I can usually convince him or her to stop lying." Most participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Research Question 2

The second research question was, *how do efficacy levels differ between practicing and preservice teachers?*

Those who indicated that they were current students in the teacher preparation program had higher mean item scores for both PTE and GTE items than those who are graduates of the program. Student responses resulted in a item mean score of 3.942 (SD = .307) on the PTE scale and a item mean score of 3.590 (SD = .238) on the GTE scale, while alumni responses resulted in a mean composite score of 3.873 (SD = .481) on the PTE scale and a mean composite score of 3.497 (SD = .270) on the GTE scale.

Although average scores on both the PTE and GTE scales were found to be higher for preservice teachers, neither of these mean scale differences was found to be statistically significant (PTE: $t(77)=.734$, $p=.465$; GTE: $t(77)=1.614$, $p=.111$). Tables 5 and 6 show the differences in PTE and GTE item means between student and alumni responses. The PTE item with the greatest differential between student and alumni means was "When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact that child's character." In other words, preservice teachers have higher efficacy beliefs concerning this statement (4.194, SD = .525) and therefore believe they have a greater ability to affect a child's

character when the student has been exposed to negative influences at home than practicing

teachers do (3.884, SD = .697). The GTE item with the greatest differential between the two

groups was "Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest." Again, students in the

teacher preparation program express higher efficacy beliefs surrounding this statement as

compared to practicing elementary school teachers.

Table 5

PTE Item Means: Student vs. Alumni

CEEBI Item	Mean response score	
	Student	Alumni
I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students.	4.222	4.419
When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact that child's character.*	4.194	3.884
I am confident in my ability to be a good role model.	4.750	4.651
I am usually at a loss as to how to help a student be more responsible.*	4.111	3.907
I know how to use strategies that might lead to positive changes in students' character.	3.943	3.878
I am not sure that I can teach my students to be honest.*	3.833	3.860
I am able to positively influence the character development of a child who has had little direction from parents.	3.944	3.860
When I have a student who lies regularly, I can usually convince him to stop lying.	2.972	2.977
I often find it difficult to persuade a student that respect for others is important.*	3.917	3.884
I will be able to influence the character of students because I am a good role model.	4.229	4.140

I sometimes don't know what to do to help students become more compassionate.*	3.083	3.209
I am continually finding better ways to develop the character of my students.	4.111	3.814

*Indicates an item that has been reverse scored.

Table 6

GTE Item Means: Student vs. Alumni

	Mean response score	
CEEBI item	Student	Alumni
Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous.*	3.972	3.977
When a student shows greater respect for others, it is usually because teachers have effectively modeled that trait.	3.639	3.419
When students demonstrate diligence it is often because teachers have encouraged the students to persist with tasks.	3.778	3.674
Teachers who spend time encouraging students to be respectful of others will see little change in students' social interaction.*	3.861	3.905
If parents notice that their children are more responsible, it is likely that teachers have fostered this trait at school.	3.694	3.581
Some students will not become more respectful even if they have had teachers who promote respect.*	2.639	2.209
If students are inconsiderate it is often because teachers have not sufficiently modeled this trait.*	3.389	3.767
If responsibility is not encouraged in a child's home, teachers will have little success teaching this trait at school.*	3.611	3.558
When a student becomes more compassionate, it is usually because teachers have created caring classroom environments.	3.861	3.791

Teaching students what it means to be honest is unlikely to result in students who are more honest.*	3.694	3.767
Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest.*	2.833	2.186
Teachers who encourage responsibility at school can influence students' level of responsibility outside of school.	4.111	4.140

*Indicates an item that has been reverse scored.

In addition to differences between the student and alumni groups, differences between those that indicated that they had received some type of professional development for character education and those that had not were also explored. Those that responded "yes" to receiving professional development (N=22) had higher PTE and GTE means (4.038, SD =.344; 3.500, SD = .349) than those that responded "no" (N=57; 3.853, SD = .424; 3.417, SD = .265). However, these differences were not found to be statistically significant (PTE: $t(77)=1.820$, $p=.073$; GTE: $t(77)=1.431$, $p=.156$).

Research Question 3

The third research question was, *what influences on their efficacy for character education do practicing and preservice teachers report?*

The open-ended response items described in Chapter III provided the data to answer this research question. Three overall themes were discerned that describe participants' responses in regards to their efficacy for character education: (a) the influence of the teacher preparation program; (b) the influence of personal values and upbringing; and (c) the influence of experiences in the classroom. Themes within specific questions regarding teacher responsibility and pre-packaged character education programs were also explored.

The influence of the teacher preparation program. In general, student responses were more specific than alumni responses in regards to the influences of the teacher preparation program in which they are currently enrolled. The majority of students were positive in relation to the program; many cited particular courses and topics within those courses. Of those that do not think there are any courses that cover character education, many responses indicated a positive influence on efficacy for character education either through experience provided in schools by the program or through professor modeling and overall themes of the entire preparation program. One student described his experience as follows: "I think most of the support I have received in this area was from professors who have modeled it but not explicitly taught it. In fact I don't think any of my courses focused on this area. I think my clinic experiences and working with students in schools has given me the opportunity to model and teach character to students." Another wrote, "I don't think the [program] coursework has focused on actively developing positive character traits within my teaching. However, the professors within [the program] model positive behavior that we can replicate in our classrooms which will hopefully spread to the students."

Alumni responses mentioned coursework only superficially; several discussed the influence of courses that focused on PBIS and other behavior management strategies that they have now been able to use in their careers. Like the student respondents, those alumni who did not think that coursework had a specific influence indicated that experience in the field provided by the program had the most influence on their confidence in their ability to support the development of positive character traits in their students. Several described how coursework and clinic experiences worked together to boost their efficacy: "I feel that the coursework gave me a

base for how to best support my students' character development. My clinic experiences, student teaching, and internship provided me the opportunity to put this information into practice."

Among both groups, no responses described any specific negative influences from the program. Twelve responses indicated a belief that none of the required coursework in the program specifically focused on any aspect of character education and therefore had a neutral opinion of the influence of the program. Of those that mentioned clinic placement experiences, the influence was always positive.

The influence of personal values and upbringing. Throughout all questions, many participants from both groups touched upon the influence of their personal values and upbringing as factors that boosted their efficacy levels for teaching character education. Those that mentioned this influence talked about "my personality," "my own character," "what I was taught growing up," and "my past teachers." One alumnus wrote that "I already had an innate interest in character development while student teaching, and pushed myself during that experience to learn more about how to teach these skills." This theme held consistent across both groups; however, students relied upon the influence of personal values more than alumni, who were able to discuss their teaching experiences more than students for obvious reasons.

The influence of experience in the classroom. Responses that discussed the influence of experience in the classroom differed between the two groups because of the inherent difference in their experiences and age. Students were able to speak towards how clinic experiences have affected their efficacy beliefs and how they think experience in the classroom will influence their confidence in teaching character education, whereas alumni were able to speak about actual experiences leading a classroom that they have had in the first few years of their career.

Overall, most students "think" that that increased experience will only serve to help them gain confidence for supporting their students' character development in the future. One student wrote, "The more experience I have with the field of education, the more I can begin to see what works and what doesn't in terms of fostering character growth." Many alumni spoke to their "current position" and how implementing specific programs like PBIS and Responsive Classroom have served to better the character of their students. A few discussed how they have access to support structures, such as "a support network in my grade level team to discuss how to best handle each situation." The majority of responses were positive about the influence of classroom experience on teacher efficacy for character education.

However, there were a couple of alumni responses that noted how they believed that too much experience can detract from a high sense of efficacy. One wrote, "The more years you have been teaching the more your tolerance levels go down as you tend to get burnt out" and another, "Sometimes though, I get frustrated because I know that nobody is helping reinforce it at home." It is important to note that this type of negative sentiment exists for our practicing teachers as well.

Teacher responsibility for student development for positive character traits.
Responses to the question surrounding this theme showed both similarities and differences between the student and alumni group. Student answers demonstrated a strong commitment to the teacher's role in developing positive character in students; they cited the need to be "role models," have "high expectations," and foster a "positive learning environment." Most of those that mentioned parents and other influences stated things along the lines of having a "mutual understanding" and how teachers "need to step in" if proper moral guidance is not being provided at home.

Compared to student responses, alumni discussed the role of the parent more frequently. However, feedback of this nature was mixed. Some wrote things similar in nature to "I believe that teachers should have partial responsibility as role models. Students spend much of their lives in the care of their teachers, particularly at the elementary level. However, our efforts will be undermined if these traits are not reinforced at home and in other environments that the student is in. The teacher should not be the only person held responsible for teaching positive character traits." Others commented, "Teachers should not be responsible for developing character traits. They should teach them and model them and give consistent positive feedback for good character, but this is something that should be reinforced at home." Several practicing teachers also touched upon the notion that teachers are already responsible for too much in the classroom, which detracts from the amount of focus they can put on character education even though they see it as extremely valuable.

In no instance did any student or alumni response state that teachers should be anything less than consistent, positive role models; however, responses differ in the amount of additional focus and responsibility that should be attributed to teachers versus a student's outside influences.

Pre-packaged character education programs. One open-ended question asked participants to share their opinions on the use of pre-packaged character education programs. The responses to this question were more limited. Many alumni respondents, and even more student respondents, indicated that they do not know what such a program is or do not have any experience with using them. In general, those that were open to using a pre-packaged program made sure to point out that it can be an effective resource if implemented with fidelity and with the understanding that pre-packaged curriculum does not fit the needs of every student.

Responses that were against using such programs were in favor of embedding character

education "more fluidly" into all aspects of the school day.

Chapter V

Discussion

Despite a resurging interest character education, its role in elementary school classrooms and teacher preparation programs has not been extensively researched. Because the success of character education implementation relies heavily upon the classroom teacher, examining this subject through the lens of teacher efficacy is necessary in order to increase effective practice. In their original study, Milson and Mehlig (2002) recognized this, stating "the literature on character education typically identifies teachers as a crucial factor in the development of character in youth" (p. 51). In their survey of practicing elementary school teachers on their efficacy beliefs for character education, these researchers demonstrated that in general, elementary school teachers feel confident in their abilities in most areas related to the development of positive character traits in their students (Milson & Mehlig, 2002). However, the researchers also concluded that although character education is of considerable importance in today's field, the topic is not given enough consideration in preservice programs, and teachers are typically given little or no training (Milson & Mehlig, 2002).

The current study was designed to use the CEEBI to explore further the relationships between teacher efficacy, effective character education practice, and teacher preparation for character education by surveying both preservice educators and graduated, practicing elementary school teachers from the same preparation program. This study yielded similar results to the Milson and Mehlig (2002) study in regards to internal consistency and similar PTE and GTE mean composite scores to both the Milson and Mehlig (2002) and Narvaez et al. (2008) studies. However, this study expanded a modified version of the CEEBI to include surveying two groups

(preservice teachers and practicing teachers), and the comparison of these groups gives us new and interesting findings.

Although no comparisons were found to be statistically significant, there is some data that presents a possibility that preservice teachers have higher levels of teacher efficacy for character education than do practicing teachers who have graduated from the same program. The qualitative data collected through open-ended response questions supports this indication. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data, the results of this study may suggest that preservice teachers tend to have a more positive and hopeful perception of their abilities in their future classrooms, while practicing teachers have a more practical view of the realities of a profession that is typically found very challenging. The question that remains here is whether these indicators are a result of overconfidence on the part of preservice teachers, burnout on the part of practicing teachers, or a combination of both. There is certainly enough indication that it is worth investigating the issue further in future studies.

The results of this study also point towards the benefits of experience in increasing teacher efficacy for character education. Although practicing teachers were able to speak more in regards to experience in the classroom for obvious reasons, both groups repeatedly indicated experience in clinic placements and teaching experience as factors that helped them feel more confident in their ability to foster the development of positive character traits in their current or future students. Although the program does not appear to harm teacher efficacy, participant responses indicate that the teacher preparation program itself does not explicitly educate preservice teachers on character education through its coursework. Instead, it is the program's overall philosophy, professor modeling, and experience in the classroom that provide the most benefit.   Milson (2003) found that direct teacher preparation has a positive effect on teacher

efficacy for character education. Based on this result, other existing research in this area and the suggestions from this study, perhaps more teacher preparation programs need to look into ways to explicitly incorporate content about character education programs and approaches, encourage critical reflection, and develop effective dispositions in their teacher candidates.

Limitations

There are a couple of limitations that need to be discussed in regard to the current study. There was a low response rate among participants (30% of students and 20% of alumni responded). Additionally, response to the online CEEBI was self-nominated, meaning those who participated individually chose whether or not they wanted to complete the survey. Both of these limitations cause this study to be not generalizable to a broader population of teachers. In addition, some of the items on the survey may have been susceptible to patterns of socially desirable responses.

Implications for Further Research

Based upon the findings of this study, future research for character education should focus on this topic as one that needs to be explored more extensively in any teacher preparation program. There is evidence that character education should not be part of a "hidden curriculum" in today's schools, but should teacher preparation for teaching character education be treated the same way? Apart from providing experience in the classroom, how can these programs better prepare teachers to meet the important demand of developing positive character traits in their students while also balancing the countless other responsibilities that are already placed upon those engaged in the teaching profession? The two approaches for educating preservice teachers on character education discussed by Narvaez and Lapsley (2008) would be interesting to

consider here – are programs purposefully choosing one approach over the other? Should new teachers be prepared for both approaches in order to ensure a long and successful career?

There are also questions that remain in relation to personal teacher efficacy and general teacher efficacy. Why do teachers tend to have higher efficacy beliefs about themselves personally than about teachers as a whole? Future teachers need to be prepared to face the realities of a challenging field, and not become frustrated or burnt-out when they do. They need to be given the tools to help them adequately provide effective character education in their practice, both through their teacher preparation and through support provided by their district, school, administration, and peers.

References

Alliance of Youth Executive Officers & UNICEF. (2003). *Children & young people: Participating in decision-making.* Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/pdf/call_action.pdf

Benninga, J. S., Berkowitz, M. W., Kuehn, P., & Smith, K. (2003). The relationship of character education implementation and academic achievement in elementary schools. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 1*, 19-32.

Berkowitz, M. W., & Bier, M. C. (2007). What works in character education. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 5*, 29-48.

Chang, F., & Muñoz M. A. (2006). School personnel educating the whole child: Impact of character education on teachers' self-assessment and student development. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, *19*, 35-49. DOI: 10.1007/s11092-007-9036-5

Character Education Partnership (2008). Performance values: why they matter and what schools can do to foster their development. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 6,* 73-81.

Edgington, W. D. (2002). To promote character education, use literature for children and adolescents. *The Social Studies, 93*, 113-117.

LePage, P., Darling-Hammond, L., Akar, H., Gutierrez, C., Jenkins-Gunn, E., & Rosebrock, K. (2005). Classroom management. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do* (pp. 327-357). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Milson, A. J. (2003). Teachers' sense of efficacy for the formation of students' character. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 1*, 89-106.

Milson, A. J., & Mehlig, L. M. (2002). Elementary school teachers' sense of efficacy for character education. *The Journal of Educational Research, 96,* 47-53.

Narvaez, D. & Lapsley, D. K. (2008). Teaching moral character: Two alternatives for character education. *The Teacher Educator, 43,* 156-172.

Narvaez, D., Vaydich, J. L., Turner, J. C., & Khmelkov, V. (2008). Teacher self-efficacy for moral education: measuring teacher self-efficacy for moral education. *Journal of Research in Character Education, 6*, 3-15.

Prestwich, D. L. (2004) Character education in America's schools. *The School Community Journal, 14,* 139-150.

Sanchez, T. R. (2005). Facing the challenge of character education. *International Journal of Social Education, 19*, 106-111.

Skaggs, G., & Bodenhorn, N. (2006). Relationships between implementing character education, student behavior, and student achievement. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 18,* 82-114.

Williams, M. M. (2000). Models of character education: perspectives and development issues. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education, & Development, 39,* 32-40.

Appendix A

Character Education Efficacy Belief Instrument

Directions:

As you read each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by circling the appropriate letters in the left column.

SA= Strongly Agree

A= Agree

U = Uncertain

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

SA A U D SD   I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students.

SA A U D SD   When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact that child's character. [a]

SA A U D SD   I am confident in my ability to be a good role model.

SA A U D SD   Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous. [a]

SA A U D SD   When a student shows greater respect for others, it is usually because teachers have effectively modeled that trait.

SA A U D SD   I am usually at a loss as to how to help a student be more responsible. [a]

SA A U D SD   I know how to use strategies that might lead to positive changes in students' character.

SA A U D SD   I am not sure that I can teach my students to be honest. [a]

SA A U D SD   When students demonstrate diligence it is often because teachers have encouraged the students to persist with tasks.

SA A U D SD   Teachers who spend time encouraging students to be respectful of others will see little change in students' social interaction. [a]

SA A U D SD   I am able to positively influence the character development of a child who has had little direction from parents.

SA A U D SD   If parents notice that their children are more responsible, it is likely that teachers have fostered this trait at school.

SA A U D SD   Some students will not become more respectful even if they have had teachers who promote respect. [a]

SA A U D SD   When I have a student who lies regularly, I can usually convince him to stop lying.

SA A U D SD   If students are inconsiderate it is often because teachers have not sufficiently modeled this trait. [a]

SA A U D SD   If responsibility is not encouraged in a child's home, teachers will have

little success teaching this trait at school. [a]

SA A U D SD   I often find it difficult to persuade a student that respect for others is important. [a]

SA A U D SD   When a student becomes more compassionate, it is usually because teachers have created caring classroom environments.

SA A U D SD   I will be able to influence the character of students because I am a good role model.

SA A U D SD   Teaching students what it means to be honest is unlikely to result in students who are more honest. [a]

SA A U D SD   I sometimes don't know what to do to help students become more compassionate. [a]

SA A U D SD   Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest. [a]

SA A U D SD   I am continually finding better ways to develop the character of my students.

SA A U D SD   Teachers who encourage responsibility at school can influence students' level of responsibility outside of school.

[a] Indicates an item that was reverse scored during data analysis

Please help me to classify your responses by responding to each of the following.

1. **Gender**   ☐ Female
                              ☐ Male

2. **Racial/Ethnic Group**   ☐ African American/Black
                              ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander

                              ☐ Caucasian/White

                              ☐ Hispanic

                              ☐ Native American

                              ☐ Multiple

                              ☐ Other: (please specify) _____

3. **Have you received any coursework or staff development in character education?**

    ☐ Yes

    If yes, please check all that apply

        ☐ Undergraduate coursework that addressed character education

        ☐ Graduate coursework that addressed character education

        ☐ Attended a character education session at a conference

        ☐ Attended a staff development workshop on character education

        ☐ Other training - please describe: _____

        _____

    ☐ No

4. **Are you currently a student in the IB/M program at the University of Connecticut?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

[The following questions will appear for those who say YES to the question above.]

    a. **When do you expect to graduate from the Neag program (5ᵗʰ year) at the University of Connecticut? _____**
                  YEAR

    b. **In what ways do you feel the Neag IB/M program (coursework, clinic experiences, student teaching, etc.) has influenced your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) within your teaching?**

    c. **What else do you feel has shaped your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) in your students?**

    d. **What is your opinion on the degree to which teachers should be responsible for fostering and supporting the development of positive character traits in their students?**

    e. **What is your opinion on the use of a packaged character education program?**

    f. **How do you think further experience in the field of education will affect your ability to foster and support the development of positive character traits in your students?**

[The following questions will appear for those who say NO to question 4 about whether they are current students.]

    a. **When did you graduate from the Neag program (5ᵗʰ year) at the University of Connecticut? _____**
                  YEAR

b. **What grade level(s) do you teach <u>this year</u>?**

Circle all that apply

        Pre-K   K   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8

c. **In which type of community do the students who attend your school live?**

Check all that apply

   ☐ Urban

   ☐ Suburban

   ☐ Rural

d. **How would you describe the socio-economic status (SES) of the majority of students who attend your school?**

       ☐ Low family income

       ☐ Middle family income

       ☐ High family income

e. **In which type of school do you teach?**

☐ Public school

☐ Private school with a religious mission

☐ Private school without a religious mission

☐ Other: please describe _____

f.   Overall, how many total years of teaching experience have you completed?

☐ This is my first year teaching

☐ 1-3 years

☐ 4-6 years

☐ 7-10 years

☐ More than 10 years

g.   In what ways do you feel the Neag IB/M program (coursework, clinic experiences, student teaching, etc.) has influenced your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) within your teaching?

h.   What else do you feel has shaped your ability to foster or support the development of positive character traits (honesty, responsibility, etc.) in your students?

i.   What is your opinion on the degree to which teachers should be responsible for fostering and supporting the development of positive character traits in their students?

j.   What is your opinion on the use of a packaged character education program?

k.   How do you feel that increased experience in the classroom (years teaching) has shaped your ability to foster and support the development of positive character traits in your students?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research effort.

Appendix B

Greatest to Least Item Mean and Standard Deviation

Item	Mean	SD
I am confident in my ability to be a good role model.	4.688	0.466
I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students.	4.300	0.603
I will be able to influence the character of students because I am a good role model.	4.179	0.528
Teachers who encourage responsibility at school can influence students' level of responsibility outside of school.	4.127	0.563
When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact that child's character. [a]	4.025	0.640
I am usually at a loss as to how to help a student be more responsible. [a]	4.000	0.877
Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous. [a]	3.975	0.479
I am continually finding better ways to develop the character of my students.	3.949	0.714
I know how to use strategies that might lead to positive changes in students' character.	3.909	0.672
I am able to positively influence the character development of a child who has had little direction from parents.	3.899	0.727
I often find it difficult to persuade a student that respect for others is important. [a]	3.899	0.744
Teachers who spend time encouraging students to be respectful of others will see little change in students' social interaction. [a]	3.885	0.773
I am not sure that I can teach my students to be honest. [a]	3.848	0.893
When a student becomes more compassionate, it is usually because teachers have created caring classroom	3.823	0.525

environments.

Teaching students what it means to be honest is unlikely to result in students who are more honest. [a]	3.734	0.655
When students demonstrate diligence it is often because teachers have encouraged the students to persist with tasks.	3.722	0.598
If parents notice that their children are more responsible, it is likely that teachers have fostered this trait at school.	3.633	0.701
If students are inconsiderate it is often because teachers have not sufficiently modeled this trait. [a]	3.595	0.777
If responsibility is not encouraged in a child's home, teachers will have little success teaching this trait at school. [a]	3.582	0.794
When a student shows greater respect for others, it is usually because teachers have effectively modeled that trait.	3.525	0.636
I sometimes don't know what to do to help students become more compassionate. [a]	3.152	0.975
When I have a student who lies regularly, I can usually convince him to stop lying.	2.975	0.679
Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest. [a]	2.481	0.904
Some students will not become more respectful even if they have had teachers who promote respect. [a]	2.405	0.855

[a] Indicates an item that has been reverse scored.